

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 SY-05 MCT-01 HA-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00 DOE-15
SOE-02 EB-08 IO-13 /127 W
-----017877 311128Z /17

R 301046Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8606
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
USINT BAGHDAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 05131

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, IR, PINS
SUBJ: IRAN: WHY THE SUDDEN QUIET?

1. DESPITE AN OCCASIONAL INCIDENT HERE AND THERE, ADDRESSEES WILL HAVE NOTED THAT RELATIVE QUIET HAS REPLACED THE RECENT TURBULENCE ON IRAN'S INTERNAL DISSIDENT FRONT. WHILE ONE OR MORE INCIDENTS OCCURRED ALMOST DAILY OVER THE PAST COUPLE OF MONTHS, THE NUMBER HAS RECENTLY FALLEN TO THREE OR FOUR A WEEK. IN ATTEMPTING TO EXPLAIN WHY THIS IS HAPPENING WE OFFER THE FOLLOWING THOUGHTS.

2. THE CRACKDOWN ON STREET DEMONSTRATIONS AND VANDALISM ANNOUNCED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND PUT INTO EFFECT BY THE SECURITY SERVICES AS OF MAY 11 WAS PROBABLY ONE REASON. ARRESTS OF SEVERAL HUNDRED DEMONSTRATORS IN TEHRAN ALONE (ONLY SOME OF THEM SINCE RELEASED) HAS PROBABLY REDUCED THE NUMBER OF ACTIVE, TRUSTWORTHY CADRES AVAILABLE TO THOSE WHO WOULD MAKE TROUBLE ON THE STREETS. IT HAS PROBABLY SCARED OFF
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CASUAL DEMONSTRATORS WHO WOULD PREFER TO HIT AND RUN WITHOUT BEING ARRESTED, WHILE FORCING THE LEADERSHIP (PRO-KHOMEINI OR OTHERWISE) TO GIVE SOME THOUGHT TO RATIONAING ITS CADRES FOR THE LONG HAUL.

3. THE SECOND REASON PROBABLY IS THAT 40-DAY COMMEMORATIONS AT THE END OF MOURNING PERIODS FOR DEMONSTRATORS KILLED IN

CLASHES WITH SECURITY SERVICES PROVIDE EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMONSTRATING IN A MORE FAVORABLE CONTEXT THAN OTHER TIMES. ATTENDANCE AT MOSQUES ON SUCH OCCASIONS GIVES POTENTIAL DEMONSTRATORS AN INNOCENTLY LEGITIMATE PURPOSE TO CONGREGATE AND BUTTRESSES THEIR PLEAS OF INNOCENCE IF THEY ARE SUBSEQUENTLY HAULED BEFORE A CIVILIAN COURT. BY THE SAME TOKEN, SUCH OCCASIONS HELP MOBILIZE MORE DISINTERESTED RELIGIOUS PEOPLE IN SUPPORT OF THE RING LEADERS, THUS SWELLING THE SIZE OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS AND GIVING GOVERNMENT SECURITY SERVICES A MORE TYRANNICAL APPEARANCE AS THEY TRY TO ESTABLISH LAW AND ORDER.

4. PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL REASONS DERIVES FROM THE MOTIVATION OF THE MAJORITY OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN THE COUNTRY. THESE CONSERVATIONS HAVE FOUND IT USEFUL, OR NECESSARY, TO JOIN THE EXTREMISTS MANAGED FROM HIS IRAQI EXILE BY AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI, BUT THEIR MOTIVATION IS DIFFERENT FROM HIS. UNLIKE KHOMEINI, WHO MAKES NO SECRET THAT HIS INTENTION IS TO OVERTHROW THE SHAH AND SEVERELY RESTRICT THE MONARCHY, THESE LEADERS HAVE MORE LIMITED AIMS IN MIND. CHIEFLY, THEY WISH TO CALL ATTENTION TO THEIR GRIEVANCES. AS LONG AS THE GOVERNMENT WAS PAYING LITTLE ATTENTION TO THEM, THEY HAD NO REASON TO WITHHOLD SUPPORT FOR KHOMEINI. NOW THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS BEGINNING TO LISTEN. THE SHAH'S INTERVIEW TO IRANIAN PRESS MEN ON MAY 13 INSTRUCT SOME OF THESE LEADERS AS REASONABLY CONCILIATORY--WHATEVER MAY

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HAVE BEEN THE REACTION OF OTHERS CLOSE TO THE SHAH (TEHRAN 4836) OR IN THE NATIONAL FRONT LAY OPPOSITION (BEING REPORTED SEPARATELY). WE KNOW THAT EFFORTS ARE ON THE WAY BEHIND THE SCENES TO GET DIALOGUE GOING WITH THE RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVES, SPLITTING THEM OFF FROM KHOMEINI IF POSSIBLE. SINCE MANY OF THESE RELIGIOUS LEADERS SEE THE MONARCHY AS A NECESSARY INSTITUTION WHICH HELPS PROTECT ISLAM AGAINST COMMUNIST CHALLENGES, AND NO ALTERNATIVE TO THE SHAH IS APPARENT TO ANYONE, THEY PROBABLY ARE PREPARED TO BE REASONABLE AND SETTLE FOR A RATIONAL, RESPONSIVE ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF THE GOVERNMENT WITHOUT ANY MAJOR CHANGES IN INSTITUTIONS. RATHER, THEY HOPE FOR A MORE UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS AND A GREATER, MORE PUBLIC RECOGNITION OF THE CONTINUING IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION IN IRANIAN LIFE.

5. OF COURSE, THE DIALOGUE PROCESS HAS NOT GONE VERY FAR YET, AND ONLY A FEW TOP LEADERS ARE AWARE OF IT. THUS THERE ARE LIKELY TO BE MORE RELIGIOUSLY ORIENTATED DISTURBANCES IN THE COMING WEEKS, BUT THEIR MAGNITUDE MAY BE REDUCED AND LONGER PERIODS OF CALM BETWEEN INCIDENTS. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT MINOR DISTURBANCES ARE POSSIBLE AROUND JUNE 5, THE OCCASION BEING OBSCURE, BUT PROBABLY RELATED TO SOME

MOURNING PERIOD. WE ARE ALSO TOLD TO EXPECT MORE SERIOUS DISTURBANCES AROUND JUNE 19, WHICH IS 40 DAYS AFTER THE KILLING OF SOME ACOLYTES OF AYATOLLAH SHARIATMADARI IN HIS OWN HOUSE BY POLICE MAY 10.

6. OUR PURPOSE IN SUPPLYING THE ABOVE ANALYSIS HAS BEEN MAINLY TO MARK THE OCCASIONS OF REDUCED VIOLENCE AND TROUBLE HERE WITHOUT IMPLYING THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS YET OUT OF THE WOODS. HARD, DEDICATED EFFORTS WILL STILL BE REQUIRED ON THE PART OF GOVERNMENT LEADERS SUCH AS COURT MINISTER HOVEYIA BEFORE THE TREND OF THE PAST FIVE OR SIX MONTHS CAN BE REVERSED. BUT A BEGINNING IS BEING MADE.
SULLIVAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 may 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TEHRAN05131
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780227-0197
Format: TEL
From: TEHRAN
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978056/aaaaaesw.tel
Line Count: 128
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 75921c9f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2693396
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: IRAN: WHY THE SUDDEN QUIET?
TAGS: PEPR, PINS, IR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/75921c9f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014